Peter was beaten to death a travellers. But none of then

WHEN a peace-loving father is battered to death at a busy village pub, witnesses are usually not hard to find.

But Cheryl Stone fears the thugs who murdered her husband Peter will never be brought to justice - because the bar where he was attacked was full of travellers who

By Alistair Self

enquiries by detectives into the savage death of postman Peter have been met by an impenetrable wall of silence.

Frustrated officers have told Cheryl they know who killed Peter but they are powerless to bring all claim to have seen nothing. Extensive charges because of lack of evidence. Peter, 37,

was set on outside the Chequers in Cottenham, Cambridgeshire - a once-sedate village that has been traumatised by an invasion of

hundreds of Irish travellers. Cheryl told yesterday how large numbers of the travellers were drinking in the Chequers

the night Peter died.
She said: 'The police think they know who killed Peter but they can't prove it because no one will talk. I don't know that we shall ever find out because of the nature of these people. The only people in the pub were travellers, but as soon as it

happened they just scattered.

'We just can't cope with it as a village.

They drive around at high speed at night in their fast cars ignoring the law. They are taking over through sheer

'It was bad enough losing my husband and explaining what happened to our children, but the coroner can't complete the inquest and I can't get justice unless we find out who did this. I am devastated.

'I had phoned Peter just after mid-night at the pub to see how he had been getting on. He said that he had been talking to some of the travellers about integrating with the local community, but I never saw him again until he lay

dying in hospital.'

The murder of Peter – father of Jack, nine, and six-year-old Molly – was the violent culmination of months of intimidation and threats that began in February last year with the arrival of hundreds of Irish travellers.

Hundreds more arrived at Easter

Hundreds more arrived at Easter after the first wave secured land called Smithy Fen. They want to buy up surrounding farmland that could become home to about 8,000 travellers. A huge haul of smuggled cigarettes

found at the site has been confiscated by police, sparking fears that the trav-ellers are cultivating an industry in smuggled booze and tobacco. There is also growing speculation that

they are involved in smuggling illegal immigrants through ports on the east coast of England to supply the demand for cheap agricultural labour.

Over the summer, the countryside around Cottenham was turned into a rubbish tip strewn with old sofas and

'He was a peacemaker he was trying to help'

burned-out cars. The village, which has a population of 6,000, has also endured a spate of burglaries.

Locals claim that more than 800 incidents involving the travellers have been reported to police, with no action taken. Last week, 1,000 residents pledged to withhold council tax until the local

authority sorts out the problem. The Chequers, close to the village war memorial, was a peaceful family inn before the travellers arrived.

Mr Stone believed his job as postman would make it easier to build bridges with them and help sort out some of the problems.

But he was beaten up in the early hours of November 29 after trying to help landlord James Hutchison clear the pub of travellers, who had refused to leave after closing time. He was rushed to hospital in a coma but died of severe head injuries two days later.

Mrs Stone said: 'It was a friendly local, a really nice village pub until about August last year when James let the travellers in, and then none of the

locals would go in.



The widow of a postman murdered in a village invaded by caravans fears she will never get justice

Sometimes more than 100 would get in there. They were aggressive and every-one else was driven out. They played up with James and wouldn't go home at

last orders. 'Peter was a peacemaker. He was try-ing to help the travellers to integrate into the community but now he is dead.' Despite a huge police inquiry, not one of the travellers in the pub that night

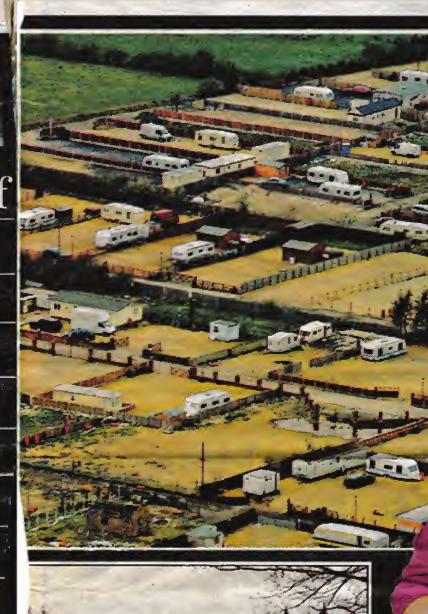
admitted seeing what happened. Five men were arrested - four of them while boarding a ferry for Ireland at Swansea, 200 miles from Cottenham – but all were allowed bail after police came up against a wall of silence.

Mr Hutchison, who needed surgery t reconstruct his face after being beate up by travellers some years ago, we so shaken that police put him in a sal

house for his own protection. Terry Brownbill, leader of th Cottenham residents' protest group said: 'The murder of Peter Stone we the last straw. We now have 1,000 peop who are refusing to pay council ta until something is done. That is half the households in the village, and the revolt is growing fast. People have ha enough after a year of violence ar

intimidation. Mr Brownbill said women in the v age are frightened to go out at nigh Local children have been forced o school buses by travellers' children ar stones have been thrown at cars. T police have tried to help but thish

swamped by the problem, he a gish
"The problems started whe caravan
travellers who had lived a us that an
travellers who had lived a us on if "The travellers intimidated everyone. site for 40 years was on in invasion of Irish tr



NO PEACE: Cottenham's rural tranquillity has been shattered by the Irish traveller encampment, top

way. The English travellers put bales of straw and trailers across the access roads to their site, but overnight the new arrivals forced their way in and drove out the

occupants. 'It was a siege, just like a war zone. Hundreds more travellers

arrived from Ireland. They have bought up land around the original site and are putting pressure on local farmers to sell more land.

'They are not traditional trav-ellers. They are young, wear expensive jewellery and designer clothes and drive new Mercedes and BMW cars.

They sell the land to other travellers from Ireland and even build permanent homes without plan-

ning permission.
'If they get all the land they are trying to buy there will be 8,000 travellers here within a couple of years, outnumbering the 6,000 villagers. They are taking over.'

Rick Bristow, chairman Smithy Fen residents' asso whose £500,000 four-be home is opposite the encan said: 'We are law-abiding of

'Our children wi at risk if we ta

We will put the council tax to pay to one side. We will pay the authorities protect us pr The English travellers wl

driven off the site now liv dled in fear a few miles av are too frightened to talk at invasion.

One said: 'If we talk our c South Cambridgeshire I

Council's planning portfolio Councillor David Bard sa